
News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Virginia National Guard and Reservists Could Be Affected By Recent VA Data Loss; Veterans Also Affected

RICHMOND—The Virginia Department of Veterans Services is urging all Virginia National Guard members, Reservists, and veterans to be vigilant and safeguard their personal and financial information. On May 22, the Veterans Administration disclosed that a laptop and hard drive with the records of 26.5 million veterans had been stolen. The records included name, social security number, date of birth, address, and disability ratings. It did not include electronic health records or financial information.

Initially, VA officials thought that data on the stolen equipment was primarily for veterans discharged after 1975 as well as for veterans who have filed a claim for VA disability compensation, pension, or education benefits, or who have (or had) a VA insurance policy, regardless of their date of discharge. Information on some spouses also could have been among the stolen data. Tuesday, the VA announced that the computer disc may have contained information on as many as 1.1 million military members on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserves.

“This data loss could potentially affect Virginia’s 750,000 veterans, 8,200 National Guard members, and thousands of Reservists,” said Virginia Veterans Services Commissioner Vince Burgess. “We encourage all Virginia veterans and active duty military to pay close attention to their financial accounts and safeguard their personal data.”

While law enforcement has no indication that the stolen information has been used to commit identity theft, the VA has established a hotline at 1-800-FED-INFO (333-4636) to answer questions about the stolen data. Information is also available at www.firstgov.gov/veteransinfo.

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Sidebar

Four Ways to Protect Yourself From Identity Theft

Place a fraud alert on your credit report

Contact any of the three major credit bureaus to place a fraud alert on your credit report. Placing the fraud alert is free, and the alert will stay on your record for 90 days.

Equifax:	1-800-525-6285	www.equifax.com
Experian:	1-888-397-3742	www.experian.com
TransUnion	1-800-680-7289	www.transunion.com

Order a free credit report

You're entitled to a free credit report from each of the major credit reporting companies once every twelve months. Do not contact the credit bureaus directly to request your free report. The reports are available only through the Annual Credit Report Service.

www.annualcreditreport.com

877-322-8228

Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281.

Monitor your financial accounts and take preventive measures

Look for suspicious activity such as:

- Inquiries from companies you haven't contacted or done business with
- Purchases or charges on your accounts that you didn't make
- New accounts you didn't open or changes to existing accounts you didn't make
- Bills that don't arrive as expected
- Unexpected credit cards or account statements
- Denials of credit for no apparent reason
- Calls or letters about purchases you didn't make

Take preventive measures such as:

- Storing documents with your personal information in a locked drawer
- Shredding important documents instead of throwing them in the trash
- Ensuring that you always use an SSL connection when submitting information over the internet. You'll see the icon of a locked lock in the lower bar of your browser window
- Using a landline when giving personal information by phone. Cell phone conversations can be picked up by other users.

Watch out for phishing

Beware of phone calls, emails, or other communications from individuals claiming to represent the VA or other government agencies and asking for personal information or asking you to verify personal information. This kind of activity is known as "phishing." The VA, government agencies, and reputable businesses will NOT contact you to ask for or confirm your personal information. If you receive an unsolicited request for your personal information, report it by calling 1-800-FED-INFO (333-4636).